

## **Interim Guidance for Seasonal Farmworkers and Their Employers in Georgia**

**February 16, 2021**

Farming is an essential business operation and activity, often supported with the use of migrant and seasonal farm workers. COVID-19 can spread rapidly in settings with many people living in close proximity, including living facilities for migrant farm workers. Agriculture employers and farm labor contractors should develop and implement plans to prevent exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19, care for individuals with COVID-19, and prevent further transmission of the disease.

### **Promote Prevention of COVID-19 Spread at Work**

#### **General Recommendations**

- Create a COVID-19 assessment and control plan.
- Provide masks or cloth face coverings for workers to wear.
- Make sure that workers have access to hand washing supplies, hand sanitizer, tissues, and trash cans at the worksite, in common areas, where they sleep, and where they eat.
- Use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Provide a disinfectant that is active against coronaviruses to sanitize counters, bathrooms, and other areas.
- Promote social distancing by providing 6 feet between work spaces, where possible.
  - If not possible, consider creating partitions between work spaces.
- Grouping workers together into cohorts may reduce the spread of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace. Creating cohorts may minimize the number of different individuals who come into close contact with each other over the course of a week, and may also reduce the number of workers quarantined because of exposure to the virus. If you have not already, reach out to your local county or district health department to establish communication.
- Basic information and training about infection prevention should be provided to all farmworkers in appropriate languages.

#### **Monitor for Illness**

- Ask workers before they start work each day if they have symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or a two-or-more of the following symptoms including chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell. Take their temperature, if possible.
  - If they have any of these symptoms do not allow them to work that day.
- House them in the area designated for sick people and arrange for them to see a medical provider, if needed. Call the medical provider in advance so healthcare workers can take appropriate precautionary measures.

- Workers with symptoms of COVID-19 should take a private vehicle to get to the medical provider, if seeking medical care. If they do not have their own vehicle, please assist with transportation. Circulate air by partially lowering window panes (weather permitting).
- If a worker becomes sick during the work day, have the worker stop working immediately and isolate the person from other workers, including others who may have COVID-19 symptoms or have received a positive diagnosis for COVID-19. People with these symptoms should not be working.

## **Promote Prevention of COVID-19 Spread Outside of Work**

### **Activities and Transportation**

- Eliminate large group activities. Increase the distance between workers during meals/free time. Plan and encourage activities that do not require close physical contact.
- Discourage visitation at your facility and offer alternative methods of visitation (Skype, FaceTime, etc.), if available.
- Anytime shared transportation, such as busses or vans, are used to move employees, attempt to limit to no more than 10 people whenever possible. This includes transportation to fields/orchards and to town for shopping. When possible, send only 1-2 people to town for shopping with a list for the entire housing unit or take multiple trips with only a few people in each trip. Shared vehicles should be sanitized between groups and at least daily.
  - If using large transportation vehicles, like a school bus, limiting to 10 people may not be possible. In these cases, allow for 6 feet between employees when possible, stagger people in seats, and encourage use of face coverings while on the bus.
- Owners/operators should maximize opportunities to place farmworkers residing together in the same vehicles for transportation and in the same cohorts to limit exposure.

### **Housing and Living Facilities**

- Increase the distance between people in sleeping spaces, where feasible.
  - In shared spaces, a “head-to-toe” sleeping arrangement with a minimum of six feet of distance between beds is recommended.
  - If beds cannot be separated by 6 feet, consider creating partitions between beds using curtains or other materials available.
- Create a plan for how you will isolate ill farmworkers from those who are not sick.
  - People with symptoms of COVID-19 should be housed in a separate room with a separate bathroom from people who are not sick, when possible.
  - Facilities with a single room should assign sick occupants to one side and occupants without symptoms to the opposite side.
  - This may include reserving a housing unit only for ill farmworkers or coordinating with hotels for isolation.
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces frequently and at least daily. Frequently disinfect things such as doorknobs, tables, handrails, and shared tools.

## If a Worker is Diagnosed with COVID-19

- Instruct workers who had close contact with the COVID-19 patient to follow guidelines for close contacts of persons with COVID-19 found at <https://dph.georgia.gov/contact>. They should be separated from non-exposed workers during their quarantine period (e.g., sleep in a separate room, work in a separate area). If they develop symptoms of COVID-19, contact a local health care provider.
- Provide facemasks and store them in a way that ensures clean masks are easily available to those who are sick and those who are caring for ill workers.
- Workers who are sick with symptoms of COVID-19 should not work until they have fulfilled the requirements in the DPH guidance for Return-to-Work: <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/dph-covid-19-return-work-guidance-after-covid-19-illness-or-exposure-persons-not/download>
- A small percentage of infected people will need hospitalization. Older adults and people with certain underlying health conditions have a greater risk of severe illness with COVID-19 infection. Work with your local healthcare providers and have a plan for seeking healthcare for workers who need it.
- No infected or exposed farmworker should be allowed or forced to return home prior to being cleared by the health department for travel.

## COVID-19 and Vaccination

- Discuss vaccination with workers and ensure they have the information they need to make a decision about receiving the vaccine in appropriate languages.
- Vaccination does not replace the need for practicing layered prevention measures (e.g. wearing masks consistently and correctly, washing hands, etc). Have a plan to promote prevention of the spread of COVID-19 regardless of vaccination status.
- Review up-to-date isolation and quarantine guidelines for vaccinated persons ahead of time:
  - Isolation guidance for those who have tested positive for or are suspected to have COVID-19: <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>
  - Quarantine guidance for those who have been exposed to COVID-19: <https://dph.georgia.gov/contact>

## Other reliable COVID-19 resources:

Georgia Department of Agriculture: <http://agr.georgia.gov/COVID-19.aspx>

Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL):

<https://www.georgiacollaborative.com/providers/georgia-crisis-and-access-line-gcal/>

National Centers for Farmworker Health: <http://www.ncfh.org/farmworker-health-network.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-agricultural-workers.html>